



REALTORS® Offer Sellers 10 Tips for Coping and Competing in a Hot Market

1. **Assemble a trusted team.** Experienced professionals can offer advice and help smooth the path to a quick, hassle-free transaction. Choosing the right Realtor is a crucial step in the process. Avoid making emotional or impulsive decisions. Use tough standards when interviewing and hiring your agent. Ask about knowledge of your neighborhood, experience in marketing and negotiating, special training or expertise, and track record. Check credentials and references.

Along with a Realtor, the team should include a title insurance representative, a homeowner's insurance agent and someone from the escrow company. As a seller, you will buy title insurance for the buyer. An experienced title rep can help you and your Realtor eliminate any exceptions on the Preliminary Title Commitment that shouldn't be there.

If you plan to move from your home after the closing date, make sure you advise your insurance agent of your plans. If there's a fire or other damage during the interval when you no longer own the home but are still residing there, your policy may not cover the loss of your personal possessions.

An escrow agent is the person who acts as the caretaker of agreements between two or more parties. This person receives documents or property for safekeeping pending the fulfillment of promises, such as the performance of specific acts or the satisfaction of certain conditions. Escrow closes the transaction for you and the buyer. In hot markets, escrow companies (and sometimes, the buyer's lender) may be nonchalant about a closing date. That may or may not be acceptable. Make sure you work with an escrow official who understands and adheres to timelines in the written purchase and sale agreement, and who will agree to advise you immediately if any situations arise that could make it difficult to close the transaction on time. This is especially important if you are buying another home and have a tight time frame.

2. **Make your house sparkle!** Before putting your house on the market, invest time (but not necessarily a lot of money) to maximize its exterior and interior appeal. Realtors who are familiar with buyer expectations in your neighborhood can advise you on which inexpensive touch ups to make, as well as whether it would be wise to invest in more extensive (and expensive) cleaning, repairs and renovations. Sometimes, cleaning and de-cluttering will be all that's needed to attract serious offers. For other properties, more elaborate preparations and staging may be required in order to showcase your house in the most favorable light for buyers.
3. **Take care of potential "appraisal problems" before listing your home.** Your Realtor can help identify conditions within and around your home that could adversely affect its value and salability. Ask your Realtor for advice on concerns that could cause an appraiser to impose conditions on the valuation. You may want to arrange additional inspections of potentially serious defects. It may be prudent to take care of those items before putting your home on the market.
4. **Make sure the house is ready for "show time" before listing it.** In hot markets, new listings usually draw immediate attention. Before having a keybox placed on your home, a sign posted in the yard, or entering the listing into the MLS database, make sure the home is in top showing condition. Once the initial wave of interest passes, buyers might start asking, "What's wrong with this home, why hasn't it sold?" Don't risk this stigma. Be prepared!

5. **Don't be greedy!** If your home is priced competitively, it could attract multiple offers and a bidding war among potential purchasers. Overpricing is a sure way for a seller to leave money on the table. The listing could languish for days, weeks or longer – raising the “what’s wrong” suspicions mentioned above. Eventually, a significant price reduction may be needed to stimulate interest.
6. **Be strategic in your listing timeline.** Ask your Realtor about best times to place new listings in your area in the MLS database and what, if any, deadlines to include for considering offers. Well-timed listings can arouse competitive bidding.
7. **Understand the Purchase and Sale Agreement and transaction process.** Have your Realtor walk you through the documents that comprise the Purchase and Sale Agreement before you list your home. That way, when offers are made (which could be within hours of the listing’s appearance in the MLS system), you’ll be better prepared to evaluate them.

There's a reason Purchase and Sale agreements are lengthy, and can have so many addendums. Every single provision on those pages is the result of some legislative enactment or court case. You are most likely dealing with your family's most important financial decision and asset. Realtors bring huge expertise to the table to help you. Take advantage of this assistance.

8. **Know the difference between a Realtor® and an agent.** Not every person in the State of Washington who has a real estate license is a Realtor. A licensee who is a Realtor is a member of the National Association of Realtors and subscribes to its strict Code of Ethics. Questions about a Realtor’s professional conduct are subject to a rigorous review process. Consumers may request a copy of this Code from any Realtor.

Along with maintaining a high level of knowledge about the process of buying and selling real estate, Realtors also have the opportunity to pursue continuing education and to earn special credentials and designations that signify specific skills and knowledge. Realtors may also join various institutes, societies and councils to enhance their expertise and networks with other professionals.

9. **Make the most of your Realtor’s advice.** Along with helping you prepare your home to sell, a Realtor can provide invaluable advice on choosing which offers best suit your needs. They can also assist with evaluating contingencies, setting and controlling timelines, helping you take advantage of tax savings and many other considerations.

Sellers should understand that finding a buyer is NOT how Realtors earn their money when they represent you. The Realtor who lists your home will start earning compensation when you start reading offers, until the day the escrow company hands you the check for your house.

Make the maximum use of your Realtors' advice, knowledge and experience during that period of time, because that's when the real risks, challenges and glitches can start to emerge that can make your transaction, or break it.

10. **Use online resources.** There’s a tremendous amount of information on the Web. Tap into www.LivingNorthwest.com for tips and tools for home sellers. By educating yourself you’ll be prepared to make rational, informed choices during a process that can be very emotional.